

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USCINCEUR IMMEDIATE
CINCUSNAVEUR IMMEDIATE
USNMR SHAPE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 285469

EXDIS MILITARY ADDEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING REPEAT BELGRADE 8455 ACTION STATE NOV 30.

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 8455

EXDIS

STATE PLS PASS DEFENSE, CINCEUR, CINCUSNAVEUR, USNMR SHAPE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MMOL, YO, US
SUBJECT: US OVERFLIGHTS OF YUGOSLAVIA

REF: STATE 285087

1. I SAW ASSISTANT SECRETARY BERNARDIC AT 10 AM NOVEMBER 30.
I REVIEWED WITH HIM HOW SERIOUSLY USG HAD TAKEN GOY PROTEST,
THAT WE HAD NO INTENTION OF VIOLATING YUGOSLAV AIRSPACE AND
THAT WE HAD TAKEN IMMEDIATE STEPS, AFTER WORD OF ALLEGED
OVERFLIGHTS, TO GROUND ALL FLIGHTS FROM THE USS AMERICA.
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SECRETARY VANCE, SECRETARY BROWN AND GENERAL HAIG WERE ALL
PERSONALLY INVOLVED. GENERAL HAIG HAD SENT ONE OF HIS DEPUTIES,
GENERAL COLLINS TO TRIESTE TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION.
GENERAL COLLINS WOULD LIKE TO COME TO BELGRADE TODAY TO BRIEF
ME AND IF I AM SATISFIED WITH THE THOROUGHNESS OF THE INVES-
TIGATION TO MEET WITH APPROPRIATE YUGOSLAVS TOMORROW TO REVIEW
OUR DATA. I STRESSED THAT WE WANTED TO BE RESPONSIVE TO THE

YUGOSLAV PROTEST BUT THAT THERE APPEARED TO BE SOME DIFFERENCE OF UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE FACTS. OUR IMMEDIATE NEED WAS TO IRON OUT THESE DIFFERENCES OF FACT OR AT LEAST TO ESTABLISH CLEARLY WHAT DIFFERENCES EXIST. THIS MAY BE A WAY TO ASSURE THAT WE AVOID SUCH SITUATIONS IN THE FUTURE.

2. SPEAKING PERSONALLY I RECALLED THAT BERNARDIC HAD ADVISED ME EARLY ON IN MY AMBASSADORSHIP HERE NOT TO PUT THINGS ON PAPER UNTIL FACTS HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED AND UNTIL THERE HAD BEEN CONSIDERATION OF THE BEST OUTCOME. THE LAST THING THE UNITED STATES OR YUGOSLAVIA NEEDS IS A PROBLEM LIKE THIS STANDING IN THE WAY OF IMPROVED RELATIONS. WE WANT TO SETTLE THIS PROBLEM. I SAID THAT I DID NOT YET KNOW THE DETAILS OF OUR INVESTIGATION BUT I COULD ASSURE BERNARDIC THAT WE WOULD GIVE AN HONEST AND RESPONSIVE ANSWER TO THEIR PROTEST. I NOTED THAT HE HAD REACTED BADLY TO MY PREVIOUS MENTION OF THE TANK DIVERSION CASE, BUT THAT WHILE WE RECOGNIZED THAT VIOLATION OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY IS A VERY SERIOUS MATTER, THERE ARE SIMILARITIES. MY POINT WAS THAT THE USG HAD WORKED VERY HARD TO KEEP THE TANK ISSUE FROM AFFECTING THE GENERAL COURSE OF OUR RELATIONS. WHAT I AM ASKING OF THE GOY IS SIMILAR RESTRAINT UNTIL WE HAVE A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF THE FACTS. I PERSONALLY THOUGHT IT WAS UNFORTUNATE AMBASSADOR BELOVSKI HAD TOLD UNDERSECRETARY HABIB THAT THIS MATTER COULD AFFECT THE GENERAL COURSE OF OUR RELATIONS. IT WAS BEST FOR BOTH SIDES TO RESERVE JUDGMENT UNTIL WE HAD TALKED SOME MORE.
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3. BERNARDIC ISSUED IMMEDIATE INSTRUCTIONS THAT GENERAL COLLINS' PLANE BE CLEARED INTO BELGRADE AND THAT HE BE GIVEN A VISA AT THE BELGRADE AIRPORT. HE AGREED THAT WE SHOULD STUDY THIS MATTER THOROUGHLY, AND UNDERSTOOD THAT THEIR PROTEST AND OUR CONVERSATIONS, HE SAID, WERE ONLY PRELIMINARY. WHEN THE GOY GETS A COMPETENT ANSWER FROM THE USG THEN IT WILL MAKE ITS DECISION ABOUT HOW TO ANSWER THE USG. THIS ANSWER WILL BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE MATTER AND THE TOTALITY OF OUR RELATIONS. IT IS GOOD THAT THE UNITED STATES IS MAKING ITS OWN INVESTIGATION. BUT GENERAL COLLINS' MISSION IS OF A MILITARY TECHNICAL NATURE, WHILE WHAT INTERESTS THE GOY IS A COMPETENT POLITICAL ANSWER, WHICH COULD OF COURSE INCLUDE SOME TECHNICAL DATA. THE YUGOSLAV INTEREST IS IN THE THINKING OF THE USG AS A WHOLE. THEY ARE LITTLE INTERESTED IN TECHNICAL DATA. WHAT COULD THEY TALK WITH GENERAL COLLINS ABOUT? THE AMBASSADOR IS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE USG. YUGOSLAVIA IS AWAITING A COMPETENT ANSWER. THAT IS WHAT IS OF CAPITAL IMPORTANCE TO THE GOY, NOT WHETHER A PLANE WAS SIX METRES THIS WAY OR THAT.

4. BERNARDIC CONTINUED THAT THE GOY HAD UNDERSTOOD FROM THE BEGINNING THAT THE VIOLATIONS WERE NOT A DECISION OF THE USG

QUOTE BUT OF OTHERS UNQUOTE. IF GOY HAD THOUGHT OTHERWISE REACTION WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT. THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME YUGOSLAV TERRITORY HAD BEEN OVERFLOWN BY SUCH MASSIVE FORMATIONS. THIS WAS WITHOUT PRECEDENT IN THE POST-WAR HISTORY OF YUGOSLAVIA. NOTHING SIMILAR HAS EVER OCCURRED. ALTHOUGH USG DID NOT ISSUE INSTRUCTIONS, THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR OVERFLIGHTS IS THAT OF THE USG. LOOK WHAT HAPPENED TO THE COMMANDER OF TASK FORCE: JUST 7 HOURS AFTER DRINKING TOASTS TO PRESIDENT TITO AND PRESIDENT CARTER AND BEING RECEIVED VERY WARMLY BY OUR PEOPLE, HE DID THIS THING TO US. WE WANT GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES BUT IS IT POSSIBLE THAT CONFIDENCE WILL NOT BE HURT BY SUCH ACTIONS? WE WERE VERY PLEASED WITH THE MONDALE, KARDELJ AND BROWN VISITS. BUT DO NOT THINK THAT SUCH A CRUDE ACTION WILL FAIL TO BRING INTO QUESTION THE CONFIDENCE OF OUR CADRES HERE. THEY ARE ASKING
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HOW CAN WE WORK WITH A COUNTRY WHO WILL DO SUCH A THING.

5. HAVING FIRST DISCOURAGED THE IDEA OF GENERAL COLLINS MEETING WITH YUGOSLAVS, BERNARDIC WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE WOULD RAISE THIS WITH THE DEFENSE SECRETARIAT. BUT HE STRESSED THAT IF THE MILITARY HERE AGREES, THEY WILL BE GIVEN STRICT INSTRUCTIONS THAT THIS IS TO BE AT THE TECHNICAL LEVEL AND NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR A POLITICAL ANSWER FROM THE USG. HE UNDERLINED THAT WHILE ESTABLISHING DETAILS WAS MOST IMPORTANT, IT WAS OF MARGINAL INTEREST IN COMPARISON WITH THE POLITICAL QUESTION OF MASSIVE VIOLATIONS OF YUGOSLAV TERRITORY. HE DOUBTED THAT COLLINS COULD NEGATE THESE VIOLATIONS. BERNARDIC SAID THAT THE COMMANDER OF SHIP HAD ACTED LIKE HE WAS IN THE PACIFIC, SHOOTING OFF HIS PLANES WITH NO REGARD FOR A SMALL COUNTRY. HE HAD BEEN PLEASED TO LEARN THAT SECRETARY VANCE, SECRETARY BROWN AND GENERAL HAIG WERE TAKING AN INTEREST. PRESIDENT CARTER HAD SENT A VERY WARM MESSAGE FOR NATIONAL DAY. BUT WHAT KIND OF GREETING WAS THE UNITED STATES SENDING WITH 19 VIOLATIONS OF YUGOSLAV TERRITORY?

6. I ASSURED BERNARDIC THAT I UNDERSTOOD HIS POINT ABOUT THE NEED FOR A FORMAL, POLITICAL LEVEL ANSWER BY THE USG. I AGREED THAT GENERAL COLLINS' DISCUSSIONS WOULD NOT CONSTITUTE THAT RESPONSE, RATHER THEY WOULD BE AN ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH THE FACTS.

7. COMMENT. WE HAVE TO COME AT THE YUGOSLAVS GENTLY ON THIS ONE. IF WE TELL THEM FLATLY BEFORE THE TECHNICAL TALKS BEGIN THAT THERE WERE NO VIOLATIONS ON OUR PART, THERE WILL BE NO DISCUSSIONS AT ALL. THEY WILL GO OFF LIKE A ROCKET. AND IF I DECIDE TO HAVE GENERAL COLLINS TALK TO YUGOSLAVS TOMORROW, IT IS STILL POSSIBLE THAT THE YUGOSLAVS MAY DECLINE TO SEE HIM. IF THEY DO AGREE I WILL HAVE GENERAL COLLINS SAY THAT HE HAS COME HERE AS PART OF HIS INVESTIGATION TO HEAR BOTH SIDES IN
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ORDER TO ESTABLISH THE FACTS. HE WILL PRESENT OUR DATA AND THEN
ASK FOR THEIRS. WE MUST FOR NOW, AVOID A FLAT STATEMENT THAT
THERE HAVE BEEN NO VIOLATIONS. THIS SHOULD ONLY COME AT THE
POLITICAL LEVEL, AND ONLY AFTER WE SEE WHAT GENERAL COLLINS CAN
SMOKE OUT. WE ARE IN FOR REAL TROUBLE IF WE, WHILE THEY ARE
STILL SO EMOTIONAL, FLATLY DENY WHAT SENIOR LEVELS OF GOV
CLEARLY BELIEVE TO BE ESTABLISHED FACT.

8. I WILL COMMUNICATE AGAIN AFTER I HAVE MET WITH GENERAL
COLLINS, WHO IS ARRIVING SHORTLY. EAGLEBURGER UNQUOTE
VANCE

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